



## Immigrant entrepreneurs should be valued by the party of free markets

By: Ken Braun- June 19, 2013

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Attending a recent briefing from a political advisor with ties back to the Reagan Administration, I was struck by a powerpoint slide showing what looked to me like a dagger aimed at the heart of the Republican Party. A survey of Hispanic and Asian voters showed very encouraging support for free-market principles and healthier entrepreneurial inclinations than white voters as a whole.

But just as strongly it demonstrated that Asians and Hispanics are put off by the one major political party that supposedly champions these values. They showed overwhelming agreement on the proposition that Republicans don't like minorities a whole lot.

Noting these are two rapidly growing hunks of the electorate - with Hispanics already comprising a huge block in crucial GOP states like Florida and Texas - the consultant observed that it's a problem when people agree with much of your message yet don't like you personally. And worse, your movement is on the way to extinction when such a group gets it in their heads that *you* don't like *them*, he said.

The source of the angst can't be tied to any other cause except an unrealistic and often hypocritical attitude of many conservatives and their politicians toward immigration.

There are more than eight million adults working jobs inside the United States with no legal authority to do so. A 2009 report from the Cato Institute says this is one of every twenty job holders. It exceeds the number of workers in all but four states.

For comparison, there are 8.7 million jobs in Florida. Imagine most of those workers scattered all over the country, along with family members. There is no way to send them home. Period. It would be a humanitarian atrocity *and* an economic nightmare.

They're here because our economy created opportunity. They risked legal jeopardy to come get it. The issue isn't a clearly stupid law, but whether or not we want the economic contribution of those people. Do we import workers or export jobs?

The "Gang of Eight" in the U.S. Senate includes four Republicans who understand that reality, and that the right answer is a law that "imports workers" by making legal residents of them. These are hardly GOP traitors: Arizona's Jeff Flake is fresh off a career as one of the U.S.

House's very top budget hawks, and Florida's Marco Rubio was the Tea Party outsider who ran over the Republican establishment to get the job.

Yet they receive the scorn of many in their party and its supporters.

This sends a message. It's natural for Asian and Hispanic citizens who have achieved the American dream to sympathize with the perspective of those also drawn here by a desire to better themselves. It feels personal when the law is so clearly at fault, yet one political party is full of white people shrieking "lawbreakers!" at brown people.

The results are easy to document. Running on harsh immigration rhetoric, Romney collected just 27 percent of the Hispanic vote in 2012. A similar dynamic dropped Bob Dole down to 21 percent in 1996 - surrendering a whopping 51 point deficit to Clinton.

Yet reasonable talk changes everything. George W. Bush argued for letting the "guest workers" stay and racked up 40 percent of the Hispanic vote in his 2004 re-election - trailing Kerry by just 18 points. Likewise, Reagan got 37 percent in 1984.

Talking about foreign workers as capitalists rather than criminals is the morally and politically right thing to do. More conservatives in the party of free markets need to get the memo.